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April 10, 2012

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Carter P. Smith
Executive Director

The Honorable Julius Genachowski, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Big Bend Telephone Company Petition for Waiver, WC Docket No. 10-90, GN Docket No. 09-51, WC Docket No. 07-135, WC Docket No. 05-337, CC Docket No. 01-92, CC Docket No. 96-45, WC Docket No. 03-109, WT Docket No. 10-208

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

On behalf of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), I am writing to request your support of the Big Bend Telephone Company's (BBTC) request for waiver of three Federal Communication Commission (FCC) Universal Fund rules including:

- (1) the \$250 cap on High Cost Loop Support (HCLS);
- (2) the updated corporate cap limitation on HCLS and its application to Interstate Common Loop Support (ICLS) ; and
- (3) the proposed application of a regression analysis to limit reimbursable capital and operating expenses for HCLS.

As you may be aware, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is the state agency responsible for stewarding the state's fish, wildlife, and parks. To that end, we operate at least 14 facilities, including state parks, historic sites, wildlife management areas, and communication towers in the service area provided by the BBTC. Suffice to say, we rely heavily on the company's services to carry out the state's public conservation and outdoor recreation mission.

The BBTC is the only terrestrial voice and broadband provider that covers its entire service area including eight Texas counties encompassing over 17,593 square miles. In addition, cellular and cable providers rely solely on BBTC's network for their backhaul link. It is my understanding that absent a grant of its waiver petition, BBTC will face serious financial challenges that may very well impede their ability to continue to operate. Such a scenario would be catastrophic for far West Texas BBTC customers, including TPWD. As aforementioned, as many as 14 department facilities rely upon voice, broadband, radio and cellular service made possible by BBTC. Loss or disruption of communication services would hinder our ability to ensure the health, safety and protection of resident, visitors, and property within state parks, historical sites, natural areas, and wildlife management areas.

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Potential disruption of communications also presents a threat to state and national security as BBTC provides service to 25% of the entire U.S.-Mexico border, and 50% of the Texas-Mexico border. TPWD's game wardens play an integral and indispensable role in border security and overall law enforcement in the vast and isolated region. Impaired or unreliable communications undoubtedly hinders their effectiveness as law enforcement officers and can place our wardens in harm's way.

In summary, we believe the residents and visitors to far West Texas expect reliable access to communications services. Big Bend Telephone Company has proudly and effectively provided that service for decades and we are certainly hopeful they may continue to do so. As such, I respectfully encourage your favorable consideration of this request. Please feel free to contact me directly should you have any questions or concerns at (512) 389-4802. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Carter Smith
Executive Director

CS:lrp